

Montana's Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program

Frequently Asked Questions

The purpose of Montana's Striving Readers Program (MSRP), is to (1) improve the school readiness and success of disadvantaged youth, birth through grade 12, by advancing their literacy skills, including the pre-literacy skills of children birth through age 5, (2) establish a comprehensive approach to literacy development based on Montana's Literacy Plan (MLP), with emphasis on data-based decision making and effective use of technology, and (3) decrease the percentage of participating high school students who drop out of high school and, therefore, increase the graduation rate at all participating high schools. Funds will be used to award **MSRP** subgrants to eligible applicants for the purposes above.

1. Who may apply for a **MSRP** subgrant?

Local education agencies (LEAs) including established special education preschools, and established Early Head Starts and Head Starts. All early childhood programs must have a demonstrated record of effectiveness in improving the early literacy development of children, birth through kindergarten entry.

2. What does a "comprehensive approach" to literacy development mean?

A comprehensive approach means a team-based philosophy for literacy improvement that includes teachers, caregivers, families, leaders, and early childhood providers in the development and implementation of comprehensive (birth through grade 12) literacy activities aligned with Montana's Literacy Plan (MLP), which will be presented at the two application workshop meetings in Helena and Great Falls.

The MLP is comprised of three levels to draw attention to the different emphases in each level: birth to upon entrance to school (emergent literacy), K-5 (elementary literacy), and 6-12 (adolescent literacy). Implementation at any level should consider the other levels. In addition, the MLP is built on a RTI framework and includes the following components:

- Leadership
- Standards
- Instruction and Intervention
- Assessment and Data-based Decision Making
- Professional Development
- System-wide Commitment
- Community and Family Involvement

3. What are the requirements to receive a subgrant?

Each LEA may include up to one established special education preschool, two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school, or a similar configuration that represents all grade levels. The

LEA may also reference and partner with a Head Start and/or Early Head Start. However, the Head Start applications will be scored and funded separately from the LEA application. Applicants are also required to leverage MSRP funds with other Federal and State funds, and demonstrate greater responsibility for securing funds to sustain **the MSRP** each year. Additional requirements in the MSRP grant application are found in section I, pages 2-5 and are accessible at: http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/Instructional_Innovations/index.php#gpm1_7.

4. What is the definition of disadvantaged youth?

Montana's definition of disadvantaged youth aligns with the federal definition and includes children and students who are: living in poverty, homeless, or in foster care; limited-English proficient, new immigrants, or migrant; challenged by disabilities; pregnant or teenage parents; at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time or have left school before receiving a high school diploma; or have been incarcerated.

5. Are there any requirements about how subgrants should be distributed across age-specific bands?

Yes. LEAs must ensure that at least 15 percent of the subgrant funds are used to serve children birth through age 5, at least 40 percent of the funds are used to serve students in kindergarten through grade 5 (or grade 6 if the building is a K-6 building), and at least 20 percent of the funds are used to serve students in middle school and 20 percent of the funds are used to serve students in high schools.

6. How may LEAs use subgrant funds?

LEAs must use subgrant funds to support activities that align with Montana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (MLP). Allowable expenses may include professional development; family literacy programs; partial salaries for reading interventionists and literacy specialists; screening and progress monitoring assessments; and instruction and intervention materials, including technology, aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

To build local and regional capacity, subgrantees may extend an invitation to other schools within the district to participate in MSRP professional development.

Additional recommendation:

In addition to addressing a comprehensive approach to literacy development, **the MSRP** recommends that applicants select a "cluster" feeder system that is likely to serve the same disadvantaged children as they progress through their education. Each age span (birth through PreK and elementary, middle and high schools) should be included. Applicants are encouraged to provide evidence of the percentage of children that move through all schools within the cluster.

7. How many subgrants will be awarded?

The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) will award subgrants by February 1, 2012. The OPI estimates that 7 to 8 LEAs, which will include 25 to 30 schools, will be funded. In addition the OPI estimates that 5 to 7 Head Start programs will be awarded.

8. What is the anticipated length of an award?

The OPI will award subgrants on a competitive basis for a project period of up to 36 months pending continual Congressional approval, availability of funds, and the recipient's progress in implementing the objectives in its approved application.

9. What is the amount of the award?

The amount of the award varies depending on the student population of the schools and the 15/40/20/20 requirement. Table 1 provides a guideline of the amount of money for each school, special education preschool, and Head Start programs. This is just a guideline and subject to review and final determination by the OPI.

Table 1: Funding and Support					
Number of Students or Children	Funds Needed Yearly	# of On-site Support Days per Month from OPI Implementation Team Member (September-May)	# of On-site Support Days per Month from Instructional Consultant (October-April)	Funds for Required MSRP Activities (see * in Table I of budget narrative)	Funds for Self-Assessment needs identified in LEAs and Head Start programs subgrant application.
1-200	\$250,000	1	2	\$100,000	\$150,000
201-500	\$300,000	2	4	\$125,000	\$175,000
500-750	\$375,000	3	5	\$150,000	\$225,000
751+	\$400,000	3	6	\$175,000	\$225,000

10. Who should be involved in the development of the subgrant application?

Applicants should involve a variety of stakeholders in the development of the application, including teachers, principals, parents and caregivers, early childcare providers, the superintendent, content area supervisors, teacher educators, school board members, and community members. Evidence of stakeholder involvement and support will be required and is part of Section III of the application.

11. What is the process for applying and the date the application is due?

The OPI will hold two application workshops. The first will be held November 2nd in Helena at the Great Northern Hotel, and the second will be held November 3rd at the Holiday Inn in Great Falls. Applications are due no later than December 15, 2011.

12. How will the program be evaluated?

The evaluation will be led by Education Northwest, the approved external provider and will examine the program's impact on student literacy outcomes, including the oral language scores of preschoolers and the state assessment English Language Arts/English Performance Scores of students in grades 3-10. For additional assessments that will be reported to the external evaluator see section 1, page 3 of the MSRP application.

13. What are the page and format requirements for the pre-application and full application?

The requirements are found in section 1, page 1 and 9 of the MSRP application.

14. What are the submission requirements?

The requirements for submission are found in section 1, page 1 and 9 of the MSRP application.

The OPI strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the last day to submit applications. No applications will be accepted after 5:00 p.m. MST on the due date.

15. Who will review and score the applications?

Applications will be reviewed and scored by literacy experts external to Montana who have vast experience in literacy development and instruction for children in at least one of the following age/grade level spans: early childhood, K-5, 6-8, 9-12. Additionally, reviewers have extensive experience addressing the literacy needs of disadvantaged youth, including limited-English proficient students and students with disabilities.

16. What support will subgrant applicants receive to prepare their proposals?

The OPI has scheduled two application workshop meetings in Helena (November 2nd at the Great Northern Hotel) and Great Falls (November 3rd at the Holiday Inn) to assist subgrant applicants in beginning the writing of their applications. The OPI is also providing Vision Net (ITV) participation at the Helena workshop. The list of Vision Net sites is on the RSVP form on the website.

[http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/Instructional Innovations/index.php#gpm1_7](http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/Instructional%20Innovations/index.php#gpm1_7).

In addition, to support subgrant applicants, the OPI will host follow-up Webinars. Information about the Webinars will be posted on the OPI Web site on the Instructional Innovations page and will also be sent to all LEAs and Head Starts that attend one of the application workshop meetings.

The OPI also offers on-going support via e-mail and telephone. See section 1, page 1-2 of the MSRP application for contact information.

17. Who do I contact for more information?

The official Web site is: http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/Instructional_Innovations/index.php#gpm1_7.

For more information, contact:

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